

Heavensent and Hellbent: Heroes of Humanity

by RivalsAreAllies

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Summary: The Spartans are a heavensent vanguard. The Sangheili are hellbent on vengeance. Alone, they are logical and lethal. Together, they are legendary and limitless. Together, they are the heavensent and hellbent heroes of Humanity. AU.

## 1. New Arrivals and New Assignments

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** I do not own Halo, or any movies, media, or merchandise associated with said franchise. ¶ But, if I did, my games would be unbeatable. ¶ Just because Halo One ("Halo: Combat Evolved") on Legendary pissed me off (It Was Almost Impossible), and I would want to share that angry aggression with love :D.\*\*

**\*\*Notable Notes/Notice:\*\*** PLEASE READ ANY/ALL BLUNT, BOLDED, TEXT THAT FOLLOWS, BEFORE READING THE STORY!\*\*

**\*\*Before-You-Read Background:\*\*** This BOLD, "Pre-Story Pretext," is my important, intrinsic, "Before-You-Read Background," and these "Before-Chapter-Author-Notes," will almost ALWAYS contain UPPER-CASE Letters, of SOME sort. Proper grammar, and other things are used CORRECTLY in these "Pretext Prologues," though. ¶ And while you should know that, you should also know that the ACTUAL STORY WILL contain GREAT spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage-and-mechanics, syntax, and semantics. Reading/RETAINING the NEXT portion of BOLDED text of IMPORTANT INFORMATION is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! By stating the important information below, it will make this FanFic immensely more entertaining/enjoyable. Also, I am NOT insulting ANY reader's intelligence/intellect, OR, any reader's knowledge, or know-how of "The Halo-Universe," by explaining/elaborating on the following facts. I am simply giving the reader necessary information that he/she NEEDS in-order to properly understand my FanFic.\*\*

**\*\*IMPORTANT INFO:\*\*** Obviously if you wish, you can skip directly

to the story, but if you do, then you risk missing important intrinsic, information. First and foremost, this story takes place in an "\_A.U.\_," also known as an "\_Alternate Universe\_," and thus, the facts, figures, and forerunnerâ€"and/or, folkloreâ€"of "\_The Halo Universe\_," are STILL FACTUAL/FUNDAMENTAL in this, MY "\_A.U.\_," BUT there are STARK differences between THIS universe, and the universe of the "\_ORIGINAL Halo Universe\_." â€|Anyways, there are some seriously and solemnly important things that you should keep in mind, while reading/reviewing this FanFic. First and foremost, I HAVE READ/RETAINED ANY/ALL of the information in ANY/ALL of the "\_Halo Books Series\_," and I am/will apply and alter that information and intelligence as I see fit. In THIS universe, the year that this FanFic STARTS in is the "\_26th Century, 2535 A.D.\_," and, HERE, in MY AU, the year "\_2535 A.D.\_," (Which Is The Year, That This FanFic Begins In) is EXACTLY TEN YEARS AFTER "\_The Covenant\_," have attacked/abolished the OUTER-Colony, "\_Harvest\_," of "\_The UEG\_," which is the "\_United Earth Government\_." So, since then (Ten Years Ago), the "\_The UNSC/UNSCDF\_," which is short for, "\_The United Nations Space Command/United Nations Space Command Defense Force\_," (The "\_UNSC/UNSCDF\_," Is/Are The Protectors/Preservers Of Humanity, And They Act As The "\_Military-Might\_," Of The "\_UEG\_") have been fighting the "\_The Covenant\_," for TEN YEARS, and Humanity has been fighting/fleeing a LOSING WAR against "\_The Covenant\_." "\_The Covenant," is an "\_Alliance/Allegiance Of BRUTAL/BLOODTHIRSTY/BRIGHT Aggressive-Alien-Races\_," and these sects/species of aliens that are a part/piece of "\_The Covenant," include the following (Names That Humans Call These Aliens Races Are In Parenthesesâ€"These "\_Human Names\_," Are Called "\_Human Handles\_"): "\_The San 'Shyuum\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Prophets\_," And They Are The Reign/RULERS Of "\_The Covenant\_"); "\_The Sangheili\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Elites\_," And They Are The Strongest/Smartest Of The Covenants' Species/Sects); "\_The Jiralhanae\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Brutes\_"); "\_The Huragok\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Engineers\_," And They Are VERY PEACEFUL/PASSIVE, And They Are HARMLESS); "\_The Mgalekgolo\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Hunters\_"); "\_The Yanme'e\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Drones\_"); "\_The Kig-Yar\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Jackals/Skirmishers\_"); AND, LAST (And LEAST), "\_The Unggoy\_—" ("Human Handle\_," Is: "\_The Grunts\_"). "\_The Covenant\_," wishes to have a "\_Humanity Holocaust\_," and DESTROY/DECIMATE Humanity, because, their leader(s), "\_The Prophets\_," have acquired and analyzed the technology of a previous/PRIOR race of alien beings, known as "\_The Forerunners\_," and they wish to use/utilize this technology to progress/perfect themselves, BUT, because Humanity is the CLOSEST in size, shape, and stature to "\_The Forerunners\_," they believe that they MUST ANNIHILATE Humanity, in-order to properly/perfectly use the "\_Forerunner\_," technology, without any fear of interference from another species (A Lot Of "\_Forerunner\_," Technology Is DNA-Based, And Humans Share DNA With The Forerunners, Which Prevents A Large Obstacle For "\_The Prophets\_"). At this point in time, Humanity, under the "\_UEG\_," and the "\_UNSC\_," have colonized/constructed MANY/MULTIPLE planets/worlds, and as such, they have MANY/MULTIPLE Governments, on MANY/MULTIPLE planets, and thus, in-order to unify/unite Humanity, into ONE, OMINOUS Government, "\_The UEG\_," was created/constructed, and every country/colony was inducted/incorporated into this new Government. HOWEVER, there were MANY renegade rebels, who wished to escape and END "\_The-UEG/The-UNSC\_," and their "\_Progressive, Power-Hungry\_," ways. These "\_Renegade Rebels\_," believed that the "\_UEG/UNSC\_," Were FORCING MANY/MULTIPLE Human cultures, countries, and colonies, to

FORCEFULLY assimilate, and thus LOSE their heritage, honor, and home-territory, and thus, they rebelled. Thus, a "\_Cruel Civil-War\_," between ANY/ALL of the "\_UEG/UNSC\_," and these "\_Renegade Rebels\_," began, and a LARGE WAR, between almost ALL of Humanity broke-out, and this war was known as "\_The Insurrections\_." Thus, to "\_Calm-And-Crush\_" this rebellion, against "\_The-UEG/The-UNSC\_," "\_O.N.I.\_," ("\_The Office of Naval Intelligence\_," Which Is A Department Of "\_The UNSC\_") created/constructed the "\_Spartan-II Perfection and Progression Program\_," which was a program, that captured, conned, and conscripted (Meaning, FORCED And/or, CRUELLY Coerced) six-year-old children into this "\_Spartan-II Perfection and Progression Program\_," which, in-turn, taught and trained them, since they could remember, to do ONLY TWO things: to \_KILL\_, and to \_SURVIVE\_. Thus, during the "\_Human-Covenant Conflict\_," these "\_Spartan-IIIs\_," are Humanities BEST/BRIGHTEST hope, and heroes AGAINST this unforeseen, unstoppable alien army ("\_The Covenant\_,") and their "\_Cruel-And-Crushing Campaign\_." Also, The "\_Human-Covenant Conflict\_," STARTS when these "\_Spartan-IIIs\_," are ONLY SEVEN-YEARS-OLD, and when they are STILL going-through their training, tempering, and teaching. Thus, when the war between Humanity and The Covenant starts, the Spartan-IIIs are NOT yet able to fight, but at the age of FOURTEEN-YEARS-OLD, they ARE put INTO the war, to fightâ€"BOTH against the "Rebels," AND, against "\_The Covenant\_." HOWEVER, the OTHER ORDINARY Human soldiers of "\_The UNSC\_," do NOT openly trust/team-up with the Spartans (Because They Think That The "\_Spartans\_" Are "Murderous Monsters"), and thus "\_O.N.I.\_" has planned another "\_program\_," for the "\_Spartan-IIIs\_," to "participate-in," in-order to make them "More Wholly-Human." This FanFic starts in the year, "\_2535 A.D.\_," and it starts on "\_Planet Reach\_." "\_Reach\_" is a planet, colonized, controlled, and concentrated, by "\_The-UEG/UNSC\_." â€|Also, here, in MY AU, Lucy and Tom are Spartans-IIIs, NOT Spartan-IIIIs. Also, please note that in THIS AUâ€"MY UNIVERSEâ€"The characters' profiles, personalities, and personas, are ALL ADEQUATELY IN-CHARACTER, and whatever traits seem "\_OOC\_," Or "\_Out-Of-Character\_," can be attributed to the fact that this is NOT the "\_Original Halo Universe\_." Some of characters, and cast, have been given different back-stories here, and some traits are presented powerfully, while others are presented passively. It should be known that, TECHNICALLY, NO-ONE is "\_OOC\_," AT ALL, due to the AU.\*\*

\*\*\_Summary/Synopsis: \_\*\*\*\*The Spartans are a heavensent vanguard. The Sangheili are hellbent on vengeance. Alone, they are logical and lethal. Together, they are legendary and limitless. Together, they are the heavensent and hellbent heroes of Humanity.  
AU.\*\*

\*\*\_Author's Amendment: \_\*\*\*\*This story will have a lot of action, adventure, comedy, romance, and a very deep-and-intertwined plot-and-premise. I respect reviews, and the more that I receive, the faster I update, because the greater the demand for update, and faster-paced-posting, the swifter the story will progress, and the quicker the chapters will be posted/published. â€|ANYWAYS, I hope that you all read, review, and enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Heavensent and Hellbent: Heroes of Humanity<strong>

\*\*A FanFic By: D. Raj David\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I. New Arrivals and New Assignments<strong>

\*\*\_PINPOINT PLACEMENT: Prowess Public High School, Bars City, AfÃ¶ld State, ÃœtkÃ¶zeti Province, Viery Territory, Planet Reach, Epsilon Eridani System; 0745 Hrs. (7:45 AM), 2535 A.D.\_\*\*

Her furiously fatal stare was burning a blazing hole through his head. He was an idiotâ€"an intelligent idiotâ€"but an idiot, nonetheless. Kelly had just met this boy, and she was already sure that he wouldn't survive the day. He wouldn't survive for one simple reason. Kelly was about to kill him. Kelly huffed in annoyance.

"Easy there, princess. It was only a joke." Will eloquently eased the situation. Kelly's brutal blue eyes harshly pierced directly through him as he spoke. Will chuckled comically. She made a decision immediately. She did not like Will.

The boy next to Willâ€"the one named Fredâ€"swiftly slapped Will in the back of his hardened head.

"Enough." he stated sternlyâ€"yet sincerely. "He is sincerely sorry. He will not repeat the action. I assure you." Fred aptly apologized for Will's rude remark. Kelly smiled half-heartedly at Fred. He was likable.

The elite eight teenagers had appeared and introduced themselves to Kelly, and almost immediately, they began to familiarize themselves with her.

The group of eight elite teens that surrounded Kelly were friendly and flattering, but their obviously odd attitude and appearances created an immediate, intriguing, and intimidating impression. The feeling of foreboding that was nestled deep down inside Kelly's mind only added to her alert awareness. She swiftly scanned and surveyed each and every one of the eight before her.

The apparent leader, Fred, seemed to be kind and caring, yet stern and solid. His blatant black hair had slight silver streaks, and his experienced eyes were never stillâ€"yet never frantic.

The apparent and clear comedian, Will, was tall, thin, and tan with an obvious muscular build. All of the eight teens had an obvious muscular build.

Linda was the redhead with the emerald eyes and amazing aim. Kelly had seen her enhanced eyesight, firsthand, during a demonstration of Linda's dexterity when she had propelled paper into an incredibly small trash bin across the hall.

The apparent jock, Joshua, held a stern, yet sincere, emotionless expression. His dark brown hair and blazing blue eyes were wary and worried, but at the same time, resigned and reassuring. He, along with Will, seemed to be second-in-command, closest to Fred's rank as the logical leader. These assertions and assumptions were never verbally voiced, but Kelly skillfully saw that this was the obvious order of ranks among the eight.

Then, the two pairs stood somewhat to the side. Adriana was leaning up against a locker, and some space behind her was Jaiâ€"who seemed to be the most aggressive and angry member of the group. Jai's light brown skin, dark hair and bold brown eyes exuded an extreme sense of animalistic aggressionâ€"except when his experienced eyes looked at Adriana.

Jai's dark hair clearly contrasted with Adriana's light brown hair, but they seemed to somehow complete and complement each other. Adriana's bluntly blue eyes searched and scanned Kelly with an air of friendliness that was genuine and gentle. She either did not notice Jai's gentle glances in her direction, or she chose to ignore, instead of interpret, his glare.

Then the two remaining members of the eight teens were the last to receive the reading stare that Kelly had swiftly shifted around the group. Tom and Lucy stood huddled together, while Tom's right arm was lightly draped around Lucy's lower left shoulder.

Lucy was, clearly and considerably, the smallest of the eight teens around her, and she was starkly silent as compared to the rest of the group. She had yet to utter a single word, and she was the only one of her friends that had stayed silent. The slight scar on her neck was a clear clue to the reasons for her silent stature. Lucy's bright black eyes and black hair perfectly matched Tom's own blatantly black hair and eyes. But, beneath her friendly exterior, Kelly sensed a familiar fatalness that loomed inside of Lucy. Lucy was little, but she was lethal.

Kelly was terrible at expressing emotions, and she was often cold and closed-off, but even she noted that Tom and Lucy made a cute couple.

Kelly surely shifted her fixed facial expression back to Fred, and she waited for his voice to alert her of the sudden shift that she expected to come in this meeting.

After some time, Fred spoke.

"It is nice to formally and finally 'meet' you, Kelly." he stated amiably. Kelly nodded in response, but the way that he said the word "meet" made her foggy feeling of doubt deepen. She did not truly know if she had ever met this boy before, and that fact frightened her somewhatâ€"and Kelly was never afraid.

"Likewise." Kelly stated in her short tone. She continued scrutinizing Fred's face, searching for insincerity or important information.

Fred chuckled comically at her response, as if he expected itâ€"as if he knew her.

She narrowed her eyes at this action, but another action entirely grabbed her immediate interest.

She swiftly swept her head aroundâ€"her brown ponytail whipping around as she did soâ€"to view this new event.

At the far end of the hallway, the doors of Prowess Public High

School forcefully flung open, and through them strode a tall teenage male with chaotically organized brown hair and brown eyes that held a bold blue streak within his irises. He walked in holding a piece of paper in his hand, and Kelly knew that he was a new student, just as she was. He gingerly glanced at the paper one time, before dropping it out of his sight.

He had not read the slip that held his schedule, but he did not want to seem as though he needed aid or assistance of any kind. He was proud. He wanted others to believe that he had power, and he was persuasive in swaying others to believe that he held this power. He couldn't convince everyone though. He couldn't convince Kelly.

He strode through the hall, his head held high, never noticing the piece of paper in his hands. There were several striking facts that Kelly could ascertain from his entrance. First, she gathered that he was strong--"very strong. Second, she learned that he was swift--"almost as speedy as she was. Third, she learned that he had readily reactive reflexes that were quick and clever--"as he, without surprise, expertly evaded the football that was accidentally thrown at his head, while managing to catch the football

The boy that had thrown the football quickly and quietly approached the tall teen. He was a well-built, blonde-haired, blue-eyed boy. He seemed scared as he neared the newcomer's vicinity, but the new student simply held the football out and handed it back to the second boy with an emotionless expression.

The boy swiftly snatched the football back and retreated back from whence he came.

The teenager looked oddly at the boy as he retreated, but he shook it off. Then, just as he began to continue his purposeful and resolute route down the corridor, a girl approached him--"an attractive one.

Kelly had an immediately reflexive reaction. She clenched her fists.

The girl smiled shyly at the new student, and he half-heartedly returned the favor. She then engaged him in conversation, and the eight teens--"along with Kelly--"found it fairly easy to eavesdrop on their conversation. Kelly did not find it odd that she could hear clearly across the hallway--"but she knew that she should have found that fact odd.

"I'm sorry about Peter. He can be an idiot sometimes." the girl said, indicating the somewhat scared boy that had thrown the football.

The teenager took notice, and he nodded in response. "That's quite alright." he responded, his expression still emotionless.

The girl's smile shrunk somewhat. He wasn't even smiling. She began to think that approaching him was a terrible idea. Kelly sensed her tepid and tentative attitude, and she smiled somewhat. She wasn't sure what the reason was, but Kelly was happy for the girl's uncomfortable uneasiness.

Will was the only one of the eight that noticed Kelly's slight change in facial features, and he smirked. He then returned his attention to

the conversation between the attractive girl, and the new student.

"â€|So, umâ€|are you, y'know, new here?" she asked awkwardly.

The boy nodded in response. "Yes." he stated simply.

The girl wanted to frown. She had failed.

"â€|So, um, what's your name? â€|Y'know, if you have one." she asked.

The boy looked at her curiously. "John." he replied plainly.

The girl did frown. "Another one-word answer, huh? I bet you'd give anything to find a one-word way to say: '\_just please go away\_.'" she said sadly.

John looked startled. "Why would I say that?" he asked, and she looked up at him.

"You don't exactly seem to be enjoying my company, misterâ€|" she trailed off, expecting him to complete her comment.

"John. It's just John. â€|Also, I am enjoying this conversation. I apologize for the fact that I have not been actively participating in it. I would just rather hear you speak. It's certainly a better alternative to hearing my own voice." he replied.

She blushed a deep red. Kelly wanted to make her \_bleed \_deep red.

"â€|I'm sorry. Did I say something wrong?" he inquired intricately.

She looked up at him, her amber eyes looking both excited and embarrassed. "No. That's the problem. You said everything right." she said, lowering her head once again.

"I do not understand." he said in response, and she straightened up to face him, her bright blonde hair briefly bouncing the light from the fixtures overhead into his eyes. He didn't dare look away from her though. He was far too intrigued.

"That's funny, because I was just thinking the same thing." she responded, smiling. For the first time since he entered the school, the hardened, hardcore teenager named John smiled sincerely at the girl in front of him.

"Well, I'm glad that I'm keeping you interested." John teased. The girl giggled. He chuckled. He was dangerously distant from his zone of comfort, but this affectionate atmosphere and the intriguingly interesting girl in front of him allowed him to not care.

"â€|Well, if you would like, I can school you some more on my boring lifeâ€"say Saturday, at '\_8:00\_?'" she proposed, her cheeks searing scarlet once again.

"Boring means '\_consistent\_,' and I like consistent people. They're dependable, and dependable people are \_astoundingly amazing \_at

working on a \_team\_â€"in a \_pair\_. " John stated sincerely, obviously meaning every elaborate word, and he smiled again at her. "I would enjoy hearing more about your '\_consistent\_' life. Saturday sounds good." he said simply.

Kelly's clearly clenched fists almost drew blood. Will grinned. Kelly had a difficult time expressing emotions, but becoming aggressive and angry were two traits that she excelled at exuding.

The girl beamed at him. Then, she became frantically frenzied. "Oh no! I thought I had my notebook with me! Dammit, I don't have anything to write my number on!" she exclaimed, embarrassed once again.

John chuckled again. "I have quite the memory. I'm sure I won't forget it, if you tell me. I tend to keep track of the important things." he said, smirking this time. Her face flamed red, and she just nodded dumbly.

"â€|Um, it's: '\_Zeta-Code, 555-7657\_.'" she slowly but surely answered him. He nodded, retaining and remembering every piece of the important information she had relayed to him.

"It would be nice to know your name as well. I would like to be able to actually ask for youâ€"not just the boring, but beautiful, blonde girl." John said comically, and she immediately became embarrassed again.

"â€|Oh, sorry. I'm Natalia. Natalia Serkhov." she replied, and he nodded.

"Well, Natalia, I look forward to Saturday." he ended their conversation, before she smiled sincerely and left his side, slightly stupefied.

John smiled shortly after her, before wiping his face clean of any trace of emotion and carefully continuing his trip towards his first class. His path was blocked by Will.

"It's your first day here, and a pretty girl asks you out during your first five minutes in the building." Will stated factually. John raised an eyebrow.

"That is impressive." Will commented, complimenting John. John elevated his eyebrow even higher.

"What he means to say, is: '\_I am happy to make your acquaintance\_.'" Joshua corrected condescendingly. Will rolled his eyes. Perhaps Kelly had misjudged him. Perhaps he and Joshua were not equally even. Perhaps he was not the second-in-command.

"My friend fails to appreciate the social skills required to survive and stay alive in schoolâ€"the skills required to \_act wholly human\_. " Will readily responded, and his combative comment left Joshua somewhat speechless. Perhaps Kelly was right the first time. Will was a comedian, but he made sense when he spokeâ€"even when he joked.

John did not speak. He swiftly scanned the group, and his eyes lingered on only a single person, the aggressively angry and

strikingly silent girl—the one with brown hair and blue eyes.

She noticed his solemn stare, and she defiantly locked eyes with him. Her blazing blue eyes met his bold, bashful brown ones, and the two felt a flurry of emotions enter their minds. None of those emotions made a single shred of sense.

Their serious stares continued to bore into the one another, until John broke away, scanning and surveying the rest of the group.

"I'm Fred. That's Will, Josh, Jai, Adriana, Lucy, and Tom." Fed interjected, introducing everyone, respectively.

John nodded, and then he refocused his gaze on Kelly. He waited. She did not speak.

"That's Kelly. You can call her princess." Will said on her behalf. She turned to him and shot him a sinister stare. He cringed slightly.

"She doesn't like that. That's what makes it so fun." he said, smirking as he did so. Kelly rolled her eyes. Will was idiot—an intelligent idiot—but she couldn't deny the disheartening and daunting fact that—even though she had just met him—he knew things about Kelly, and he knew them very well. Again, a sense of foreboding flooded her body.

"John." John replied regretfully. He did not like disclosing information.

Fred nodded, seeming to be satisfied with the response. Kelly, however, was nowhere near satisfied.

"You seemed to have had no trouble introducing yourself to a stranger mere moments ago, yet—even though we weren't wary of you—you have an unhealthy uneasiness around us." she stated suggestively. She was accusing him.

John raised an eyebrow and eagerly and expertly eyed the blue-eyed girl. She was bold, blatant, blunt, and bashful. John wanted to hate her. He wanted to hate every fiber of her being with every fiber of his being. But, he was far to enticed by her to hate her. He swiftly surveyed her. He wanted to study her, but he did not have enough time to do so. He hated the fact that she was so very enigmatically enticing to him. He hated her, because he liked her.

"Apparently, I had the skillful sense to be wary of you all—\_especially you\_. You know a great deal about me, and that puts me at a disadvantage. I do not like being at a disadvantage." he swiftly shot back at her.

"Regardless, you are at one, and I always win, so it would do you no better to be at an advantage." she retorted, rather vehemently.

"We are not competing." he stated simply.

"You should count yourself lucky." she said in return.

John smirked. "I assume that you pay so much attention and study and

scrutinize only the people who you perceive as the threats. In which case, I would warily assume that you consider me a threatâ€"and rightfully so. You, Kelly, are the one who should count yourself lucky." he commented cunningly, reversing her logic.

Kelly furrowed her brows, and John's stern stare hardened. Will grinned even wider than before, and Lucy caught this action. She silently shook her head at Will, and Will put his hand to his ear, telling her that he had not heard her. Lucy scowled, and he smirked. Tom saw this, and he frowned at Will. Will's smirk solidified.

Kelly opened her mouth, intending to utter some clever comeback to John, but the bell rung throughout the hallways, swiftly silencing Kelly. The bell told the students that they had five minutes to enter their first period class in a timely manner.

John and Kelly simply stared at the other, both unmoving and unnerved. Fred broke the silence.

"We had originally come here to ask you if you would consider joining the '\_Prowess Perfection Program,' here at school." he stated cautiously.

Both John and Kelly ignored him. He continued carefully.

"It's a \_ridiculously rigorous \_program to push and progress one's physical fitness, and mental magnitude, and each school in the area puts their best and brightest '\_Perfection Program Participants'\_ to compete locally and largely against the participants of other schools. Our trainer has personally recommended you to us. It is the reason that you have been transferred to '\_Prowess Public High School,' to compete with our team. We would be honored if you would join us." Fred finished.

John and Kelly answered simultaneously, never removing their gaze from the other. They both knew about the program. It was one of the reasons that they had chosen to come to this school. "We have heard. Where do you meet?" they inquired in unison.

"We meet after school, in the school's main gym." Fred responded. John and Kelly nodded, and once again, they spoke simultaneously.

"I'll be there." they stated surely, and with that they both turned to face Fred. He nodded in response.

"Very well then. I'll see you both after school." he replied readily. John and Kelly nodded in response.

They began to leave the group, and as they were walking away, they both realized that they were veering in the same direction.

Kelly narrowed her eyes at John as they walked. "Where are you going?" she asked.

"AP Biology." he responded. She huffed whole-heartedly. That was her destination as well.

"It looks like we \_are \_competitors after all." she commented, and out of her peripherals, she noticed a small smirk creep onto John's

lips.

"Good." he replied earnestly. Kelly sighed. This was going to be a long day.

Back at their lockers, the eight elite teens talked among themselves.

"William, you are going to ruin this if you continue being so blunt, so bold, and so brainless." Fred chastised his friend.

"Look, '\_leader\_,' you know that the \_only \_reason that you're commanding us is because John and Kelly have no idea what is happening. I would appreciate reverence and respect to be shown to me. I am just as skilled, smart, strong, and sensible as you are, '\_Fredric\_.' We \_all \_are." Will said, gesturing to any and all of his friends. They all nodded in response.

"I realize that, and I respect you all. If you feel that another among us is better suited to lead us, then please verbally voice your opinion, and I shall swiftly step-down. But, until that time, I give orders, and you follow them. That is how a '\_team\_,' works." he replied, and Will was silent for a time, before he narrowly nodded. The others silently acknowledged and accepted his declaration as the truth.

"We have to slowly ease John and Kelly back in. We have to slowly, but surely, re-induct and reintroduce them back into the program, while retaining their humanity. That is the whole point of this program." Fred stated, and all eight of his friends nodded, except for Jai.

Jai brutally banged his hand into a nearby lockerâ€"leaving a very noticeable dent as he did soâ€"and he exploded in his vehemently venomous voice.

"No. The '\_whole point\_,' of this '\_program\_,' is to make us more appealing and acceptable to the soldiers that make us out to be monsters. This '\_program\_,' is meant to make us more able to be readily accepted by the '\_UNSC Forces\_,' so that they'll feel comfortable \_dying \_with us. We aren't learning to become more human, to help, heal, or harden us. We're learning to be '\_more human\_,' to help and heal the soldiersâ€"and the civiliansâ€"who do \_not \_accept us as soldiers, saviors, or sentinels. This '\_program\_,' is meant to make the general populace of humanityâ€"the same populace that \_forced \_us into '\*\*\_compulsory conscription\_\*\*,'â€"to be able to accept and appreciate us. They put us here, for \_their \_protection, and yet somehow, we're still the murderous monstersâ€"the ones that \_they \_turned us into. The '\_whole point\_,' of this '\_program\_,' is bullâ€" Jai was immediately interrupted by Fred.

"That's enough, Jai." he said sternly. Jai looked at him with a fatal ferocity in his brown eyes, but he stayed silent. The entire group of eight agreed with Jaiâ€"although not a single soul said so.

"'\_O.N.I.\_.' is probably listening to every word we utter right now. You would \_all \_be wise to mark your mouth and watch your words." Fred instructed.

The mere moment that '\_O.N.I.\_' was mentioned, Jai became taught and tensed. Adriana laid a hand on his shoulder, and her tender touch calmed him down almost immediately.

"We should get to class." Fred instructed. The elite eight nodded in agreement.

They all glanced at their schedules and dispersed in their desired directions. Lucy and Tom shared a quick kiss before going their separate ways, and Jai and Lucy walked together towards their first period classâ€" '\_Physical Fitness.\_'

As they were walking, Lucy felt frustrated feelings being openly and energetically emitted from Jai. She stopped him, and she silently signed to him, '\_What is the matter? Are you angry?\_'

Jai understood her signs, and he quickly responded with silent signs of his own.

'\_No. I'm fine. Really.\_' he swiftly signed back.

Lucy scowled. He was lying, and she knew it. Jai quickly and quietly changed the subject before she could press or push him any further.

'\_We have defensive tactics lessons today, in Physical Fitness.\_' Jai signed, and she nodded, already knowing this fact

'\_Just try not kill anyone on the first day. It would look a little conspicuous if the shrimp slammed some huge girl in a DT fight.\_' he signed, and Lucy smirked in return, before rolling her eyes. Jai didn't speak about his sentiments, or express empathy, and although Lucy wanted to know what he was thinking, she seemed to honor that he did not want to talk, and she did not push him. The rest of their route was filled with silence.

Lucy was suddenly slammed by the sickening silence. The scar on her throat now physically pained her.

The two sped silently towards their class, neither saying a word. One liked the silence. One did not. The silence was delightful to one, and it was deafening to the other.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>PINPOINT PLACEMENT: "High Charity Covenant Carrier City<em>\*\*\*\*," \_In Orbit Around Planet Pegasi Delta, 51 Pegasi System; 0820 Hrs. (8:20 AM), 2535 A.D.\_\*\*

Thel 'Vadamee walked warily throughout the halls of the Covenant carrier, his arm slung securely around the small shoulders of Mea 'Nadakaee, his female fiancÃ©e. His slick, silky skin held its usual shadowy stature, and as he walked, he seemed to be a living, \_lethal\_, shadow. Although Mea was darker in complexion than Thel, she looked lighter, somehow, as if her calm, cool, and collected demeanor had somehow spread to her outward appearances.

His experienced eyes gently gazed down at his escort, and she responded by slightly shaping her upper mandibles in an upward fashionâ€"a semi-smile.

Thel nodded narrowly, and he continued down the corridor, a narcotic nervousness and a sense of fearfulness taking hold of him.

After some time, the two silent Sangheili reached their destination.

The two Sangheili stood at the deadlocked doors that led to the Profits' "Council Chamber."

Thel was worried. This fruitlessly fearful fact was surprising to him, because his skill, strength, speed, and sense were of legendary status—especially, due the amazing actuality that he was years younger than most Sangheili soldiers—and he was one who never became fearful easily. He was usually fearless. He was afraid today, though.

He wasn't fearful for his health, though. He was fearful for her health.

Mea had always been peaceful and passive, and his reasons for choosing her as a mate had spawned from years of her affectionate actions towards him. From the moment that her father was expectedly ended—executed—by the "Covenant High Council," Thel had taken it upon himself to see that his childhood friend, Mea, was safe, secure, and silent.

Her voice was always scanned, scrutinized, and studied for any sign of treachery. Her father was accused of heresy, and she was always being watched.

Thel had proclaimed this his protection of the girl was nothing more than a favor for a friend. He lied to himself, though. Her caring kindness kept him sane, especially through the treacheries and terrors that the young Thel 'Vadamee had endured.

Through his connection with her, he became stronger, smarter, and saner. He became connectedly complete. He realized that she was his living lifeline—his reason for his enduring effort, energy, and emotional ecstasy. Thel had little reason to rejoice. She was the only reason. She was the only thing that made his life livable. She was his, and he was hers. They belonged to each other.

Of course, with his rising to the ranks of "Covenant Combatant," and thus being actually allowed to fight alongside his brothers, Thel needed a wife to complete his honor.

The proposal was prepared and presented with great care and caution. He feared rejection—and the skilled Sangheili soldier, Thel 'Vadamee, never feared rejection. Of course, rejection never occurred, after her eager and excited acceptance, there stood Thel, smiling for first feasible time in ages.

Now, his fearfulness had returned. He was not afraid of rejection, however. He was afraid, for her. The "Covenant High Council," although buried and busy with the ongoing war effort, had called the young Thel—and his fiancée—specifically to their chamber.

This never occurred, especially for a Sangheili as young as he was. Thel was sure that this was a "Charging Council," to try his mate.

Thinking of this possibility, he immediately became ill.

He couldn't lose her. He wouldn't allow it. But, he could do nothing if the Council decided to end her. His immobilizing illness became unbearable.

Mea seemed to sense this, and she gently grazed his arm. He turned to her, and his mandibles snapped shut. He was solemnly scanning her. His upper mandibles slowly inched upward. He smiled at her. She opened her mouth to speak, but before she utter a single sound, the door in front of the two opened, and a strong silver-haired and silver-streaked Jiralhanae stepped through the threshold. He was the "Commanding Chieftain" of the Jiralhanae race. He was Tartarus.

He spoke with such fierce finality, that Thel himself felt fear rise in the atmosphere around him—but not in himself. Thel 'Vadamee was not afraid—never afraid.

"Thel 'Vadamee, The Prophets will see you now." Tartarus spoke solemnly.

Thel nodded, and approached the door Tartarus had just appeared from, his fiancée some feet in front of him. Tartarus stopped Mea, and the meticulous motion of his hand gracing her shoulder sent her some feet backwards, although she kept her footing.

"Your mate stays here." Tartarus commanded condescendingly. He spoke in English, a tell-tale sign that he was a high-ranking contact with the "Covenant High Council".

Mea nodded humbly, and she obediently obliged, but she was fretful and frightened. This did not please Thel. If one threatened Mea, then Thel threatened them. Thel killed threats. Tartarus was eagerly eyeing Mea, and he did not notice the swift Sangheili step in front of his mate.

"You will address her with respect." Thel commanded.

Tartarus expertly eyed the Sangheili soldier. "You will watch your words, young worm." Tartarus readily responded.

Thel did not appreciate that. "I would highly consider your options, ape. You will show remorse and respect to the female. Or you will be shown none." Thel voiced vehemently.

Tartarus knew what was meant. That was the wording of a worthy warrior. Those that Thel did not show respect to, were the ones he killed. Soldiers did not threaten their superiors in an openly obvious way. That was a sure way to ensure execution. Thus, Thel did not openly or overtly threaten Tartarus. He threatened him in an obvious, yet well-concealed, fear-filled fashion. He threatened him conspicuously, yet covertly.

Tartarus huffed in hearty annoyance. He brutally brushed past Thel and his mate, brushing shoulders with Thel as he did so. Thel did move as Tartarus had intended him to. He stayed solidly still.

The two met in a silent stalemate. Thel and Tartarus aimed their experienced eyes at the other, and the moment that their deviously dark eyes met, a single truth was revealed to both of the

soldiers.

That truth was simple one. The death of one would be caused by the other. That was the truth. It would end exactly as they had both sensed it would. One would kill the other. Tartarus smirked as walked away. He would enjoy killing Thelâ€"if the Sangheili did not end the Chieftain first.

Thel turned to face his mate. She was still scared. He rubbed a gentle hand on her shoulder, before she looked up and gestured to the open door behind him. Thel nodded and smiled weakly.

He headed through the open door.

The three ruling and reigning Prophets of the Covenant sat silently upon their firm floating thrones.

The Prophet of Mercy and The Prophet of Regret sat silently on either side of their apparent leader, The Prophet of Truth. Truth seemed to sense the apprehension inside Thel, and he shifted his view to slowly, surely, scan and survey the Sangheili in his entirety. His loose, leathery skin seemed sag in a sickeningly solemn manner.

He raised a brown, bony finger to Thel, and he gestured for him to approach the three Prophets. Thel approached them.

"Thel 'Vadamee, you show promise." Truth spoke at last. Thel immediately noticed that the Prophet spoke in Englishâ€"the language of heretics.

Thel bowed his head graciously. "The praise of the Prophets is true praise indeed." Thel responded respectfully.

"Thel, you may raise your head, young one." Mercy spoke to him. Thel raised his head. He expectantly eyed the Prophets.

"We speak in English, in the language of our enemies and of heretics. Yet, speaking this tongue does not corrupt us. On the contrary, it empowers us to expertly exterminate our enemies. We must act against our enemies to exterminate them, and acting against them requires knowledge of their teachings, their tactics, and their targets. This requires understanding them. This requires studying, surveying, and speaking as they do. We act as they do, so that we can act against what they do. My brother, they wish to destroy, desecrate, and decimate the holy path of perfection that we, our brethren, and the entire entity of the universe, as a whole, must travel to reach salvation. There are slayers of our salvation. There is only one name for these kinds of beings." Truth elaborately explained.

Thel nodded. He understood. Regret spoke next.

"What would you call these beings, Thel?" he asked the young Sangheili.

"Demons." Thel responded rightfully. The three prophets shifted their views to their two other cohorts, and then returned their godly gazes to Thel.

"I would concur." Truth stated seriously.

"Unfortunately, though, the humans are not the only beings that should be considered demons. There are others. There are heretics. They are the embodiment of evil, of enmity. That is why we have called you here, Thel." Truth said, severely eyeing the Sangheili.

This was the thing that Thel had feared. The Prophets were speaking of heresy, and the fact that Mea had been called here was certainly not a coincidence. Thel sighed deeply.

"You speak English, Thel. You learn like the humans, like the heretics. You are aptly able to act against them. You are youngerâ€"younger than any Sangheili of your rankâ€"and you are years younger than the average Sangheili soldier, yet you have the heart, and harshness of an expertly experienced Covenant Combatant. You are ready." Truth stated simply. Thel and Truth locked eyes.

"What, exactly, am I ready for, your holiness?" Thel questioned carefully.

"You have performed admirably, and you have eagerly engaged the humans in combat. You are experienced. You are skilled strong, smart, and sensible. You are the perfect candidate to lead a partyâ€"to obliterate the camp of a heretic." Truth explained.

Thel was warily worried, and his caution and carefulness only increased after the latest comment Truth had uttered.

"Heretics?" Thel asked aptly.

"Yes. These are the separatists that have preached and practiced against our sacred ways. They are the ones who have called for an uprising against the Covenant. They are the ones who must be stopped." Truth said, and Thel erected to his full height.

"Of course, sir." Thel readily responded, eager to defeat this enemy of the Covenant.

"The Sangheili known as Sesa 'Refumee', now known as the heretic Sesa Refum, is commanding, controlling, and campaigning against us, my brother. He has an advanced armada, and if not addressed, the threat he and his heretic allies pose would do great harm to our cause." Truth clarified.

Thel nodded in understanding.

"You must stop him." Truth ordered ominously. Once again, Thel nodded.

"His soldiers are amassing on the former human world of Madrigal. His arrival on the planet will occur within the next several months. When that time comes, you will lead an attack on the planet. You will end this heretic." Truth stated, and Thel placed his hand over one of his hearts.

"You will be assured of my victory. The heretic will not live!" Thel readily replied. He was prepared for combat.

"Until that time, you will assemble your teamâ€"a sparse assortment

of sensible, strong, and swift soldiersâ€"and you will train and teach them. You have had experience on Madrigal beforehand. You foughtâ€"very valiantlyâ€"in the extermination of the human populace on Madrigal. You are the clear candidate for this assignment, 'Vadamee. You will not fail us!' Truth boomed boisterously, and his two comrades nodded in assenting agreement.

"I shall succeed!" Thel roared back, and Truth nodded, believing the words of the Sangheili as the truth.

"With this promotion, we assume that celebration will come before preparation. That is why we have called your mate here. The '\_Chamber of Commemoration\_' is through the corridor outside, and to your left. It would be disadvantageous to waste time to retrace your steps to retrieve your mate. It is easier if she is already hereâ€"as we have already seen to." Mercy spoke semi-sincerely to Thel, and he nodded in thanks to the three Prophets.

He now understood. The Prophets did not wish to harm Mea in any way. They were being caring and considerate. Thel was thankful for this.

He had no worries remaining. He had only pride, power, and prowess. He would celebrate tonight. He would assemble his team tomorrow, and soon he would kill the heretic.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>PINPOINT PLACEMENT: UNSC Combat Carrier, "Blades of Retribution," In Orbit Around Planet Aesir, Alpha Antini System; 0840 Hrs. (8:40 AM), 2535 A.D.<em>\*\*

"The '\_Covies\_,' while worth-while, are \_not \_the original objective! We are deploying to secure '\_Site Six\_,' and ensure that the enemy does not gain access to the structure. Killing the Covenant is a second priority!" Commander Miranda Keyes yelled, her animatedly angry stare aimed at Major Antonia Silva. Major Silva was the Commanding Operating Officer of the "\_Orbital Drop Shock Troopers\_," that had been assigned to this mission.

"My men. My mission." Silva shot back, his brutally blazing brown eyes piercing her own enraged emerald eyes. She opened her mouth to utter a retort, but before she could, another man verbally voiced his own remark.

"Actually, Silva, it's \_my \_men, and \_my \_mission." the tall man addressed the Major. Silva looked taken aback. The newly noticed, tall, thin, man was obviously another "\_Hell-Jumper\_," a popular phrase used to identify "\_ODSTs\_."

He was a muscular man that shared the same bold brown hair as Commander Keyesâ€"although his hair was short croppedâ€"and he had gently gruesome golden eyes. He was heartfelt, yet hardened, in his sentiment and stature. He was experienced.

Silva shifted his gaze from Miranda to the man, and then back again. "Hmmpf. Nepotism." Silva stated smugly.

The man opened his mouth, but Commander Keyes spoke swiftly, before he could even attempt to articulate a response.

"Captain Keyes, is indeed, leading the Helljumpers on this task. You can opt or object otherwise, but nothing will be changed. The original objective remains the primary task." Keyes stated surely.

Silva slumped into his chair. The other Helljumpers in the briefing room seemed to be obviously off-put by that fact that this novel newcomer was going to be leading them into battle. The unbearable silence became unbearable unrest. The many other Helljumpers in the briefing room began to voice their opinions.

Once the arguments became angrily articulated, two men shot from their seats, and they immediately found their way to the side of Commander Miranda Keyes. One of the men was a muscular middle-aged man, with dark hair and eyes, and an admiral rank clearly plastered on his UNSC lapel. He was Admiral Jacob Keyes. The second man was a dark-skinned, dark-eyed, dark-haired, UNSC Marine with a dark demeanor. He was not a Helljumper.

"Enough!" the Admiral screamed sternly, and almost immediately, the chaotic chatter ceased. The Helljumpers all turned their heads to the Admiral and his two comparable comrades.

"We are not following a child into combat, for crying-outâ€" a Helljumper named Corporal Taylor Miles voiced venomously, but he was immediately interrupted by Commander Keyes.

The dark-skinned marine was chuckling comically at the Helljumper's outburst, and he anxiously awaited the Commander's reply.

"That 'child,' is a well-trained, extremely experienced 'ODST,' and he is also my brother." Commander Miranda Keyes stated seriously, eyeing each and every one of the Helljumpers. They all remained silent.

"â€œ|And my son." Admiral Jacob Keyes intricately input.

The ODSTs looked to their fellow silent soldiers. They were speechless.

It was at this point that the young man, the one that had assumed leadership of any and all of the Helljumpers in the room before him, stood and spoke.

"Gentlemen, I realize that respect is hard-earned. I realize that respect is hard-given. I realize that I am likely that last person that you wish to lead you in combat. I also realize that a large lot of us shall perish, and never set foot on dry land again. I am a newcomer, and apologize that the first mission with some of you will be my last as well. I will lead you as best as I can. I will be the first one on the battlefield, and I will be the last one off. I will do my best to bring you back alive, but I cannot guarantee a single shred of hope for your survival. We are facing a fight with brutal beingsâ€œ|beings that wish to destroy the lives that we have all strived, sacrificed, and slaved to build. These beings are belligerent, blunt, and bold. They will stop at nothing, and I realize that we are obviously outmatched. But, we want for this lifeâ€œ|this life that they wish to destroyâ€œ|to survive, for it to thrive. We are imperfect, but through our imperfections, we thirst

and thrive to know more. We continue on in everything and anything that we undertake. We are human, and we are imperfect, but our imperfections are what makes us perfect. We are worth fighting for. Life is meant to learn, to survive. The Covenant want to killâ€"not survive. Due to that fact, they have stated that do not wish to live. And so, we will oblige them. I will lead the select soldiers among you that will accept me as your commander, Captain Michael Keyes, and we will jump, feet first, into hell." the young man sincerely spewed his speech to his soldiers.

"Look, kid, I may not like you. Hell, I hate you. But, I respect you, just as equally. I'd follow you into a fight." Major Silva spoke, splitting the silence.

The rest of the ODSTs seemed to nod in assent and agreement. Captain Keyes silently sighed a breath of relief. He had gained their respect. He smirked at his sister, and she rolled her eyes.

The dark-skinned man noticed Commander Miranda Keyes' emotional expression, and he performed an action that was obviously odd for him to execute. He smiled.

Admiral Keyes noticed this reaction from the marine, and he conspicuously cleared his throat. The dark skinned man smirked before slowly snapping to attention.

"Now that I have your undivided attention, we can return to the task at hand." Commander Keyes stated. The ODSTs nodded.

"Luxia! Bring up the mobile map of 'Area 72!'" the Commander order, and instantly, the A.I.\_ named Luxia appeared on the hologram pad before her, and she projected a global map of the planet beneath themâ€"Planet Aesir.

The planet was completely covered in water. It was an oceanâ€"entirely an ocean. Only a few UNSC floating "Center Cities," manmade cities that exported weapons for the war effort, littered the planet's wet surface.

The map zoomed and zeroed in on a single site, "Area 72." This floating city was the site of the precious "Site Six," that O.N.I. had ordered defended or destroyed.

"You're objective is simple. Drop. Deploy. Infiltrate the city. Kill Covenant. Secure the site. Any questions?" the Commander intricately inquired, and in return she received not a single response.

"Good. Get prepped." she ordered, and the Helljumpers nodded, before the Admiral, Jacob Keyes, spoke.

"You're combat experience will be close-quarters Covenant combat. This will be difficult, and dangerousâ€"very dangerous." Admiral Keyes stared sternly at his son as he said the word "dangerous." Captain Keyes expertly eyed his father, unflinching.

The Helljumpers seemed to understand. "That, is why we have him." the Admiral said, gesturing to the dark-skinned marine.

"This is Sergeant Major Avery Johnson. He has seen more combat and Covenant blood than any man in this roomâ€"even me. Hell, he spilt

\_most of it. He is to instruct you on your technical tactics for combating Covenant at this range." Admiral Keyes stated, and at the utterance of his statement, Johnson stepped forward.

Commander Keyes had a sudden sincere expression cross her face. She looked at the Sergeant with worry. She did not know he would be venturing out on this mission as well.

"Hey, I thought you died on Harvest, you stubborn son-of-bitch!" Silva said, swiftly shooting up and shaking Johnson's hand.

Johnson smirked. "No. But I \_felt \_dead. It was probably the result of killing for living for so many years. â€|And being so damn good at it." he said, smirking. Miranda rolled her eyes.

Silva chuckled. Johnson was an ally, and he was alive. That was enough to make any soldier excitedly ecstatic at this point in the war. \_Many, many \_marines were dead.

At this point, two ODSTs approached the marine, and the Captain who led them all walked over as well. One of the ODSTs was dexterous dark-skinned man, and the other was young light-toned soldier.

Captain Michael Keyes noticed that one of the Helljumpers was the objecting ODST that had questioned his leadership. Michael remembered that his name was Corporal Taylor Miles.

"â€|I want to apologize forâ€"" the Corporal started, but stopped when his Captain immediately interrupted him.

"Don't. Corporal Miles, save it for the battlefield." he stated sternly, and the Corporal nodded.

"Call me '\_Dutch\_.' " he readily replied. "Sir." he finally finished his statement, and Captain Keyes gained a small smirk as a result.

"Will do, Dutch." he replied.

"Lance Corporal Koju Ago, sir." the second Helljumper introduced himself, extending his hand to Johnson. Johnson slowly shook the outstretched hand before him.

"Don't be so formal, kid. The Covenant sure as hell won't be." Johnson remarked reproachfully.

"Call me '\_Romeo\_'" and a few tips for Covie-killing would be greatly appreciated." the Lance Corporal replied readily.

Johnson raised an eyebrow. "\_Romeo\_? Look, kid, I know I'm irresistible and all, but I play for the other team." Johnson said sarcastically.

Lance Corporal Koju Agu seemed to enjoy this remark. "I guarantee you, sir, it's for the ladies." he replied. Johnson nodded. "â€|And, as for tipsâ€|?" he continued his comment from earlier.

"Tips? The Covenantâ€"\_all \_of them, '\_The Squidheads\_,' '\_The Apes\_,' '\_The Grunts\_,' \_all \_of themâ€"are living. And, if they

live, then they can die. That's the only tip, kid. Always remember that they can die just like you and me. And, if they can die, then you sure as hell make sure they know it." the hardened marine said, taking a cigar from his pocket and perfectly placing it in his mouth.

Before he could light it, though, Commander Miranda Keyes swiftly snatched the cigar out of his mouth and tossed it in the trash.

He scowled at her. She smirked at him. "Bad habit. It'll kill you." she stated simply.

He looked at her with disbelief and delight. "Tell you what, Commander, if those cigars kill me before the Covies do, everything in my will gets left to you." he said smugly, and she scowled at him.

"Alright. Everyone report to the prep rooms! On the double, troopers!" Admiral Keyes bellowed, and the Helljumpers were quick and quiet as they exited the briefing room, and traveled down the halls towards their armory, their armor, and their "Single Occupancy Exoatmospheric Insertion Vehicles," their drop pods.

Johnson and Commander Keyes were the last two to remain in the room. Before they could exit, however, Admiral Keyes stopped them.

"Hold it, you two. I've got a special assignment for you. Johnson, you're going to give the ODSTs the important information that you have, and then report back here." Admiral Keyes ordered. Johnson looked sour. He didn't like missing a battle.

He opened his mouth to refute or retort the Admiral's words, but when he saw the hurt, heartfelt, and hardened expression of Miranda Keyes beside him, he swiftly shut his mouth. Hurting himself would hurt her more. He could care less about himself. But he refused to cause her pain.

"Sorry Johnson, you're sitting this one out." the Admiral said sorrowfully. Johnson nodded, and he promptly walked out of the briefing room.

When the two were left alone, Commander Keyes questioned her father. "What 'assignment?' " she asked aptly.

He sighed. "It's for an old friend." he replied. She raised an eyebrow.

"Who?" she inquired once again.

"Doctor Catherine Halsey." he said simply, before walking out of the briefing room.

Commander Keyes was stunned speechless. Miranda was left to rack her brain, and try to understand the shocking, surprising, and startling information that her father had just bestowed upon her. She wondered what working with the good doctor would mean. Only one word entered her mind. It was the word that depicted the trained, tortured, and tormented souls that Doctor Catherine Halsey had bestowed her maternal instincts upon instead of her own daughter. Spartans.

\*\*A/N: Yes, Michael Keyes is an OC ("Original Character"). Well, that was certainly an interesting intro, was it not? R&R and stay tuned for the next update!\*\*

## 2. Normally Abnormal

\*\*Disclaimer:\*\* I do not own Halo, or any movies, media, or merchandise associated with said franchise.\*\*

\*\*Author Apologies(s): \*\*\*\*PLEASE, read ANY AND ALL of the following BOLDED text! Wow. Well, first of all, it has been a long time. I am so very sorry for the ridiculously-late response/update. I was caught-up with real-life, for a while (Baseball, Track-And-Field, Graduation, College Finalizations, Etc.), and my FIRST thought was to keep-track-of, and respond to any and all of the outstanding message-conversations that I have on this here siteâ€"and update any and all of my existing FanFictions. However, just as I got back on this site, I realized something: I have been reviewing/revising/re-writing my FanFictions, BEFORE I upload/update them, but it was NEVER ANYWHERE CLOSE to how much I NEEDED To review/revise/re-write them! ...So, I STARTED reviewing, revising, and rewriting ANY AND ALL of my FanFictions, and just when I was about HALF-WAY through doing that (I Have OVER 200,00 WORDS Published/Posted On This Godforsaken Site! Do You Know How LOOOOOONG That Takes To Review/Revise/Rewrite?! VERY LONG!), and about to respond to any and all of my messages, when my life fell apartâ€"literally.\*\*

\*\*Between psychotic breaks, episodic events, and metal crazes, (All Of Which Were Caused By My Life, That Just Happened To Turn Super-Sucky), I was, well, incapacitated.\*\*

\*\*You don't need an excuse. But, you do deserve one.\*\*

\*\*The good news (For EVERYONE) is the following. Writing my OWN ORIGINAL Books-Series (There Are FOUR, SEPARATE, UN-Related, Book-Series, And Hopefully, I Will Have A Literary Agent/Publishing-Deal, In A Year, OR Two! â€|On The SLIM Chances That Is DOES Actually Occur, Or Happenâ€|), looking for agents, looking-into-querying, and FAN-FICTION have become my outlet! ...So, my depressing life will make for AWESOME FanFiction, with HAPPY undertones (But, My Stories/FanFictions Will STILL Have Character-Deaths [Well, SOME], Gore, Blood [NOT TOO Much, Though], Romance, And NO OOC-Ness, OR Mary-Sues, Mind-You!).\*\*

\*\*I have JUST finished-up reviewing/revising/rewriting my CURRENTLY-POSTED chapters of any and all Fan Fictions, and today is the day that I shall be updating ANY AND ALL of my FanFictions. And, also, today is also the day, that I will-be starting three NEW FanFictions, and they will be the LAST FanFictions that I will EVER startâ€"unless, I decide to do a cross-over, between my DC-Comics-FanFiction, and my MARVEL-Comics-FanFiction (BOTH, The MARVEL-FanFiction, AND, The DC-Fan Fiction, Features A Teenage, Next-Gen-Hero-Team, So Having Them Team-Up In A Cross-Over Would Be Kind-Of Cool. â€|But, IF I Do That Cross-Over, Then That Definitely Would Be The LAST Fan Fiction That I EVER START!)! For a timeline of future updates you should know this: "\_I Will NOT Cancel ANY Of My FanFictions!\_" I WILL FINISH THEM ALL! â€|If you wish to have a

better idea of how often updates will be coming, though, I have FOUR FanFictions that take precedent over my others, and as such, those four will probably be updated faster than others. You should all note, however, that I WILL be updating ANY AND ALL of my FanFictions! However, I am unsure, as to how long each update will take, so PLEASE HAVE PATIENCE! So, to keep-up with the updates, PLEASE, subscribe to me/my-story, favorite me/my-story, or message me and ask me to personally message you whenever I DO update, and I will HAPPILY do so!\*\*

\*\*\_Author Advertisement(s): \_\*\*\*\*\*That's right. Ads. I have TWELVEâ€"Count-'Em, TWELVEâ€"FanFictions On here, that will ALL end-up, being OVER 100K-Words, and they will ALL be updated REGULARLYâ€"HOPEFULLYâ€"from this point-on. â€|So, if you happen to read in any of the OTHER FanFic FanDoms, that I write for, then, PLEASE, by all means, do NOT hesitate to check-out some of my OTHER FanFictions! Check-out my profile for more information (And Some Awesome Quotes, As Well!), and MESSAGE ME, if you have ANY questions, or just want to chat! I, contrary to popular belief, LOVE to hear from fellow FanFiction-Readers, as-well-as, my own readers! â€|Also, it should be noted, that ANY AND ALL of my Comic-Based-FanFictions, are VERY EASY to understand, and they are MADE for EVEN a NOVICE/NON-Comics-Reader, to be able to understand VERY EASILY, and things are explained VERY clearly in these above-mentioned Comic-Based-FanFictions, of my own creation.\*\*

\*\*\_Accolades/Appreciation: \_\*\*\*\*\*Thanks for ANY/ALL of the reviews! I really appreciate them, and I take them all into account. Don't stop now, though! ONWARD!\*\*

\*\*II. Normally Abnormal\*\*

\*\*\_PINPOINT PLACEMENT: Prowess Public High School, Bars City, AfÃ¶ld State, ÃætkÃ¶zet Province, Viery Territory, Planet Reach, Epsilon Eridani System; 1140 Hrs. (11:40 AM), 2535 A.D.\_\*\*

The two teens, Lucy and Jai, walked into the lunchroom, laughingâ€"although only one of them was laughing audibly. Eight teenagers were already sitting at a table at the far end of the large room, and they were beckoning the two teens to come and sit with them. Lucy and Jai noticed their eight friends, and they made their way over to the table. There were two teens sitting down at the table that were not present at the meeting with John and Kelly that morning. Lucy smiled at the two fresh faces as she sat down.

The boy with the blond, browning, hair and emerald eyes smiled in return, as did the girl with the dirty blonde hair next to him.

"Sam, Grace, I thought that you two had died or something. Since when are you two late to school?" Jai teased.

"School is important, but there are things that are far more important, Jaiâ€"things like meeting with the woman that is making our '\_schooling\_,' possible." Sam retorted, smiling sincerely at his friend.

Everyone else raised an eyebrow at Sam, and Jai looked sour. Doctor Halsey. She was the only mother figure that the Spartans knew. They

would kill for her. They would die for herâ€"and Spartans \_never \_died. They just went to hell to regroup. Jai didn't feel the same way about her, though. And it showed.

"What'd the bitch say?" Jai asked, and the other teens all looked at him in surpriseâ€"even Linda, who \_rarely ever \_showed \_any \_emotion.

Grace cleared her throat. She swiftly scanned the expansive entirety of the cafeteria, so as to confirm that no one could hear her. Then she whispered to her nine friends, as quietly as she could.

"Ahem. Well, she said that, once the two-in-question are ready to be re-inducted into 'the Program' and they regain their memories of their experiences, that we'll likely be deployed. â€|And, since we are \_running out \_of places to be deployedâ€"as the Covenant is glassing every world from Harvest, to Aesir, \_to hellâ€"we will need to be deployed shortly, if we are to have \_any effect \_in this war. That means that we \_need \_to make John and Kelly experience humanistic qualities, as much and as quickly as possible. We \_need \_to make them understand \_why \_we \_have \_to fight, why being \_human \_is important. The majority of the ODSTs have already expressed \_severe \_animosity towards us. We can't fight \_against \_them, while also fighting \_with \_them. So, we need to be what we are defending. We need to be \_human\_, before 'O.N.I.' will allow us to be deployed. If we don't pass their psychological evaluation of our humanistic qualities at the end of this 'Program', then we won't be able to fight. They assess that we'll do more harm, than good in the battlefield, if we remain at the psychological stage that we are at currently. So, to assist us with speeding-up John and Kelly's humanization, an officer will be assisting us in our practices for the upcoming competitions for the 'Prowess Perfection Program', and since the program is linked the ROTC for the UNSC's different branches, the training should serve John and Kelly well in stimulating their \_retained \_training, skill, and instinct, which \_should \_jump-start some of their memory-retention." she said silently. Her friends all nodded in return. Jai scoffed.

"What officer?" Joshua asked curiously. He was thinking the same thought as the others.

"You'll have to wait and see. We'll meet him later today, at practice." Sam responded on Grace's behalf, not even attempting to hide his smile.

"Hmph. They \_took \_our humanity, and then expect us to fight for their own. Such a waste. We were taught, trained, and tempered for years to kill, to \_survive\_, yet we can't even do those two things rightâ€"at least in their don't deserve to be saved. We can't fight against them, and we can't even fight \_for \_them now. John and Kelly made the right decision to request the history of the 'Spartan-II Progression Program'. And then Halsey made the wrong decision, as she always does, to have them wiped." Jai said sternly, yet silently.

Fred narrowed his eyes at him. "Enough, Jai." he reprimanded the young Spartan.

"Aye, sir." Jai said, saluting Fred mockingly. Fred opened his mouth to say something, but Adrianna cut him off.

"You don't really believe those things, Jai. You want to, and you want to need to believe those things. But you can't. Believing those things is not logical, and after we disregard emotionâ€"which we have always doneâ€"then the only thing left to govern our decisions is logic. Logic states that the strong live, and the weak die. We are strong, Jai. Those that put their faith in us, those that believe in us, are strong. Faith is perseverance. Faith is strength. Those that put their hopes in us, in the UNSC, have faith. They have strength. Thus they must live. And we must ensure that they do." Adrianna reasoned, and Jai locked eyes with her, as he relaxed his form and loosened his fists that had become clenched.

Jai looked up at Adrianna, and he smiled somewhat, his smile soon turning into a smirk. "Do you always have to do that?" he asked exasperatingly.

She smiled. "Do what?" she asked, smirking in return.

"Win an argument against meâ€"by agreeing with me." he replied. She shrugged. Jai shook his head and turned to Lucy who was eyeing him seriously. She started laughingâ€"soundlesslyâ€"once again. Jai laughed in return, and their eight friends all looked at the two like they were insane.

"What is so funny?" Joshua asked, annoyed by their laughter.

"Lucy almost gave this one girl a concussion, in a DT fight in Physical Fitness." Jai said, through bursts of laughter. "And, when she came-to, she wondered what had happened, and Lucy signed to her, 'you were hit by a jumbo shrimp.'" Jai said, laughing even harder. Everyone else shared a quick chuckle as well. Except Linda. Will laughed the hardest, but his fit was over the quickest, as well.

Fred looked at Lucy, and after his laughter died down, he eyed her sternly. "Luce, you know that we're not supposed to draw any attention to ourselves." he stated.

She nodded, looking down apologetically. Tom looked at her sincerely. "What did she say to you, Luce?" he questioned her.

Lucy looked at him signed a single word, which doubled as a bold-faced lie. 'Nothing.' she signed silently.

"Well, just be glad that the shrimp didn't kill her!" Will said humorously. Everyone laughed again, and this time even Linda gave a small chuckle.

Tom narrowed his eyes, and he walked over to her, and took her off to the side. "Lucy, what did she call you?" Tom repeated his question.

Lucy looked into his eyes and signed in response. 'She called me a cripple.' she replied.

Tom sighed. He kissed her forehead. "Will was right. I commend you for not killing her." he replied. Lucy smiled at him and pecked him quickly on the cheek. The two quickly returned to the others. Linda shot them a knowing look, but said nothing.

Then, the last two Spartans entered the large commons areaâ€"loudly\_.

"No, you idiot, '\_Wasserbaum Battery Bombs\_,' are \_not \_a practical method of eliminating enemy forces in combat. They are cumbersome and difficult to procureâ€"even with the right materials." Kelly shouted at John, as the two entered the commons. The ten teenage Spartans all turned their heads to view the incoming pair. Will smirked once again. Grace had to silently disagree about Kelly's comment. Grace could make an explosive out of \_almost anything\_.

"They are not difficult to procure if your I.Q. is above 2." John shot back, and Kelly fumed silently, as the two walked throughout the room.

Fred beckoned the two over with a signal. They caught sight of it, and they made their way to the table, both fuming mad.

"What happened?" Fred asked, and Will answered before either of the two angry teens could even attempt to open their mouths.

"Let me guess. Kelly used a '\_Wasserbaum Battery Bomb\_,' on Natalia, and it didn't kill her, so Kelly is defending her failed plan, by saying that those bombs are difficult to use." Will offered, and Kelly shot him a fatal glare, while her cheeks turned slightly red. John looked slightly confused, but he shrugged it off.

"Well, if you must know, we were in AP Chemistry, mixing highly reactive alkaline metals with their ideal ionic pairing-partners, and when describing our expected results, Kelly remarked that making a '\_Wasserbaum Battery Bomb\_,' was easier than the assignment. I agreed, but then she went further and said that, although they were easy to make, they were hard to use. I disagreed, and an argument eruptedâ€"because Kelly was wrong and would not admit it." John explained.

"Idiot." Kelly mumbled. John glared at her.

Fred shot Will a concerned glance out of the corner of his eye. "â€|Um, how, exactly, do you two even \_know \_what a '\_Wasserbaum Battery Bomb\_,' is?" Joshua asked the two, and they both opened their mouths, closed them, looked at each other, shrugged, and turned back to Joshua, unable to answer. John and Kelly had no idea how they had so much information about explosivesâ€"or weapons in general, for that matter. John and Kelly were going to have difficulty not drawing attention to themselves.

Joshua and Fred shared the same look that he and Will had just previously shared. This was going to be more difficult than any of them had ever imagined.

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>PINPOINT PLACEMENT: "High Charity Covenant Carrier City," In Orbit Around Planet Pegasi Delta, 51 Pegasi System; 01200 Hrs. (12:00 PM), 2535 A.D.<em>\*\*

Thel waited outside of room, waiting for the door to open. The door slid apart and the person that he wanted to talk to came through the

open archway. Thel stopped the grown Sangheili warrior, and he turned him around to face him.

The other Sangheili spun swiftly, and he instantaneously entered a fighting stance. He relaxed his stance when he saw that Thel remained relaxed. The other Sangheili eyed Thel curiously.

"Brother, I wish to discuss a proposition with you." Thel said suddenly.

The other Sangheili nodded. "So speak, brother. I am listening." he replied, relaxing his form even more.

"Shipmaster Rtas Vadumee, I need your assistance. I am gathering a group, a squad of superior Sangheili soldiers, as requested by the Prophets themselves, to eliminate a radical cell of Heretics on a nearby planet. I must acquire this team quickly, and I know that you know many well-trained, well-experienced, and well-versed warriors of such a caliber. I am in need of them. And I am also in need of a shipmaster that can navigate hostile air with confidence and skill. I have seen you work, and I know that you are the pilot, whom I seek. I need these things, and you need me. Take this offer, and we will both solidify our assent into the high ranks of the Covenant, brother." Thel explained.

Rtas thought for a few moments. "You speak your mind, but you follow your heart. That difference could rip you apart, young one. Be careful. I shall assist you. But, only if you can give orders that will be clear to my men. Your conflict of heart and mind must not affect your ability to lead. Is that agreed?" Rtas answered back.

"Of course, good shipmaster." Thel responded readily.

Rtas nodded. "Very well. Meet me in the second-tier training room in a short time. I will be waiting with what you need, soldier." Rtas said, walking away.

Thel nodded, sure of himself. He now had a pilot. And a promise. A promise from a Sangheili was worth more than a ship full of Brutes. They always kept their words.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>PINPOINT PLACEMENT: UNSC Combat Carrier, "Blades of Retribution," In Orbit Around Planet Aesir, Alpha Antini System; 0840 Hrs. (8:40 AM), 2535 A.D.<strong>

ODSTs were taught, trained, and tempered to do two things: kill and survive. And they were very good at those two things. Beside Spartans, they were the best that the UNSC had to offer, the best that humanity had to offer, and they were excellent. But they weren't enough. Captain Keyes looked over his shoulder, as he held his helmet in his hands. The rest of his armor was already in place, securely around his body, as his helmet was held firmly in his hands.

The armor that any and all of his ODSTs were wearing was the new "Neo-Nano-Neural" Model, and it was a vast improvement from the earlier models. The suits of armor had tiny neural fibers, that

inserted themselves into the neural-uplink in an ODST's neck, and thus, the suit was contained, controlled, and maintained, not only by the soldier's physical actions, but by their mental thoughts, as well.

The suit was made of many metallic alloys, and they were all interweaved, and stitched-together, by an invisible forcefield of empirical energy, that reinforced the suit, as well as powered it. The forcefield reactively responded, readjusted, and replied to added pressure forces, and energy from the outside of the suitâ€"and it always protected its user. But the suit of armor was not nearly as strong, or durable, as the MJOLNIR powered-assault armor that Spartan-IIIs were famous for wearing in battleâ€"although Spartans hadn't been seen on any battlefield, for months. Some soldiers were happy for the disappearance of the Spartans, claiming them to be monsters, untrustworthy, and unreliable. Captain Keyes knew better. He trusted the Spartans. He had seen them in action. He knew what they could accomplish.

He knew that the UNSC needed them to return to battle, if humanity was to have any chance of winning this war.

The new, "Neo-Nano-Neural Model," powered assault suit would transfer the heat from the plasma of incoming enemy fire, and send searing surges of heat into the interior of the armor. This method kept the exterior of the armor mostly-fresh, and battle-ready. But, it came at a great cost. That heat that traveled to the inside of the suit affected the soldier inside in a bad wayâ€"a very bad way. But, even though this heat would most-likely injure any ODST, it would not stop them. Besides that fact, though, every ODST was equipped with, at least, one medical packâ€"each of which contained a nano-healer-serum.

This serum was pumped from the exterior injection-port, directly to the interior systems of the armor, and eventually, into the neural-uplink of the ODST in question. Once this happened, the microscopic robotic elements of the serums traveledâ€"quicklyâ€"throughout the soldier's body and attacked foreign infection, repaired damaged tissue, and sealed open wounds. It was a very useful tool for any soldier. But it was also highly expensive to manufacture, and as such, it was in rare supply nowadays.

Captain Keyes looked over his men and women, all of them suited-up completely, save for one. The one that were not completely suited up had her armor completely on, except for the helmet that she carried in she hands.

Keyes walked over to her. He swiftly scanned around him. All of his other Helljumpers were fully-suited-up, and checking their weapons. The one woman that had her helmet in her hands was scanning a weapons rack. The weapons on the rack were all close-quarters weapons. Captain Keyes knew who he was looking at. He knew all of his soldiers. He did his homeworkâ€"always. He was just like his father in that regard. The only difference between him and his father was that, instead of going into the Navy of the UNSC, Michael Keyes had chosen the special division of the UNSC Marine Corps.

Keyes walked over to the woman. She swiftly spun to face him, and she nodded sternly, ready to salute, before he stopped her with a hand.

He quickly pulled her record from his memory. Lieutenant Lina Capulti. Italian. Exceptional hand-to-hand combatant. Killed several elites at close-quarters. Home-world glassed when she was seventeen years of age. Family killed. She watched. Anger issues. Rash decisions. Battle injuries. Many of themâ€"as the scar above her right eye showed. All of this though, Captain Michael Keyes used to form \_one \_word that described the Lieutenant effectively. Dedicated. â€|Or, perhaps, a better word would beâ€|\_martyr\_.

She narrows her eyes at her superior, and she raised an eyebrow expecting him to say something. It had been almost an entire second. That was a long timeâ€"to an ODST.

Her long black hair was tied up in a ponytail hanging over the back of her shoulders. The regulatory hair-length had been readjusted by the UEGâ€"five years ago. Females were no longer required to shorten their hair; in fact, it was encouraged for females to allow their hair to grow outâ€"not too long, so as to have it affect their skills in combat in a bad way, but long enough. The UNSC no longer wanted to try and make all of their soldiers seem similar.

The UNSC knew that their soldiers, their civilians, that the military that protected humanity consisted of \_many \_different kinds of people. They were differentâ€"but equal. Males were, by default, stronger than females. But females were, by default, far faster than males. These differences were acknowledged, and they were usedâ€"to the \_advantage \_of the soldiers. The UNSC wanted to acknowledge these differences, and so the regulatory hair length for women was revised.

The Lieutenant cocked her head to one side. She narrowed her eyes at her superior. He returned the favor, before he shifted his gaze to the weapons rack above her. She carefully, cautiously, turned her head back to the weapons rack. She eyed the M90 shotgun that was housed there. Captain Keyes eyed \_her \_as she eyed the weapon.

She was about to reach for the shotgun, when her superior finally spoke.

"Lieutenant, I would highly suggest that you take another weapon." Captain Keyes addressed her.

She turned back to him and raised her eyebrows. "Oh? And why is that, sir?" she asked aptly, a sense of defiance in her eyes.

"You and I both know that you're an intelligent woman. And, using that intelligence, you can't tell me that you plan to use that weaponâ€"on this missionâ€"if you want to live. If you get close enough to use that weapon down there, then you're as good as dead. And you're no good to me, dead. I realize that you enjoy fighting at extremely close-quarters, but that does not excuse your past actions. Regardless of what you \_like \_to do, what you \_will \_do is \_follow orders\_. And the first one is a simple one: do not die. If I've done my homework correctlyâ€"and I always do it correctlyâ€"then you are my second-in-command, and second only to Major Silva and myself, on this mission. I don't need you dying in some crusade of intense martyrdom for your homeworld." he explained elaborately.

The defiance in her eyes grew, and it spread to her lips as well. Her eyes narrowed further. "With all due respect, sir, I will follow any

order that you give me on the battlefield. But, here, in this room, is one of the few places that I have left to make my own decisions. And I will do just that. And if I choose to dieâ€"then so be it. If you want to stop me, then go to hell. â€|I'll meet you there." she said seriously, grabbing the M90 shotgun, and securing it to the magnetic back of her armor.

Captain Keyes was not amused. "I'm already in hell, Lieutenant. I've been there for some time. I've seen men and womenâ€"good men and womenâ€"lay down their lives for this cause, for this war. And, none of them have ever done so out of spite. They gave their lives, so that we could use our own. We owe them. Their memories are the one thing that ties us to this pitiful existence. And I won't have you disrespecting them by dying, simply out of spiteâ€"whether that be spite be for me, or for your enemy. And, this is the goddamn battlefield, soldier. Every single planet that has humans on it is a target for the Covenant. And, if it's their target, then it's our objective. And you know damn well that our objectives are always on a battlefield. So keep your word, follow my order, and do not die." Captain Keyes addressed the rash young Lieutenant.

His brash, experienced, eyes met her angry, aggressive, amber eyes. She narrowed them, and he returned the favor.

He took a battle rifle off of the weapons rack, and forcefully shoved it into her hands. "At least get some range into your damn arsenal." he added finally, walking away, ending the discussion.

"Very well then, sir.." she said solemnly, giving him subtle saluteâ€"using a not-so-subtle tone.

Captain Keyes did not notice thisâ€"or, rather, he pretended that he did not notice it.

"Damn. No offense, ma'am, but I think that you just turned me on, a little." Romeo said, walking over to her. His helmet, like the helmets of the rest of the soldiers, was already in place.

He held his S2AM sniper rifle tightly against his body.

Lieutenant Capulti rolled her eyes and donned her helmet, making sure that the circuits in the helmet merged mentally with the circuits in her neural-uplink, which merged with the circuits in the rest of her armor.

"Lance Corporal, I am in no mood to deal with a horny Helljumper. You are useless, unless you are completely focused on the mission at hand. If you are not, then you are useless. If that is the case, then it's a shame. But, regardless, we could still use your body as bait to lure, and ensnare, the enemy. I'd have to kill you for that purpose, though. Now, only one question remains. Are you going to be useful, dead or alive?" she asked the Lance Corporal aptly. He nodded solemnly.

"Alive, ma'am." he said seriously. She nodded and walked over to the drop-pods. Her pod was stationed directly next to Captain Keyes' pod. She inhaled deeply and said nothing.

Romeo released the breath that he was silently holding. There was no

sign of falsity in her eyes. She might have just actually killed him.

The heads-up-display finally flashed to life on her helmet's visor, displaying the information about her currently-held weapon of choice—“but not her choice—the battle rifle, as well as information regarding her health, stamina, and her grenade count. The HUD also carried general information, regarding how much nano-healer-serum was already in her system—and how much more she could take until her maximum limit was reached.

She then walked over to a rack that held med-packs, and she picked one up and fastened it to the metallic magnetic plate on the back of her armor.

Captain Keyes had his own helmet on as well, and as soon as his own HUD lit up, he turned to, and addressed his ODSTs.

“We're all already in hell. Let's make sure the Covenant join us there, as well. Sound good?” he addressed his soldiers

They all responded, in unwavering unison, “HELL YES, SIR!”

Lieutenant Capulti rolled her eyes silently under her shielded visor. She had to admit that Captain Keyes knew how to motivate his men, how to gain their trust. She respected that. She even respected him—even if she didn't like him.

Major Silva walked over to his pod, on the other side of Captain Keyes, and he entered the vessel.

“Alright then. Luxia, prepare all the pods for immediate drop.” Keyes said suddenly. The A.I. appeared on a holographic pedestal near the Captain and she nodded at his request, already fast at work trying to complete it.

All of the Helljumpers stepped swiftly into their pods, and they latched the door shut behind them. The only escape would come on the battlefield.

Luxia gave one final warning, and then silence was heard, as the pods left their sturdy solid docking posts on the ship and plummeted towards the arid atmosphere below them.

Lieutenant Capulti cleared her mind. She closed her eyes as her pod plummeted straight into hell. The temperatures skyrocketed in the pod. The jarring force and acceleration was bone-shattering. But she made no notice of it. She had a clear picture in her mind. A picture that explained exactly why she did these things.

The picture was simple one; it was picture of her hometown—as plasma from the sky burned it to ashes. It was a picture of her younger brother—bleeding and unable to be resuscitated. It was a picture of her father and sister, and although her sister was older than her, panic was clear on their features. It was a picture of her father, the fearless insurrectionist leader, knowing that he couldn't win. It was a picture of her planet—from orbit—as it burned. It was a picture that she could never rid herself of—and would never want. It was a picture that reminded her why she fought.

She opened her eyes, just as the pod impacted "harshly" with the ground, and the door flew off its hinges. An Elite was a few feet away, its plasma rifle leveled her head. She narrowed her eyes and rolled forward, just as the alien fired. As she hit the ground, and her body rolled forwards "towards her enemy" she quickly pulled two frag grenades from her mid-section-magnetic strip on her armor and she primed them, cooking them as she rolled.

She skillfully stopped her rudimentary roll, just as she was on her back, and her feet were poised to launch up "to strike her opponent in the chest. She launched herself up without a second thought. Her feet impacted the Elite's chest, before it even knew that she had risen from the ground. She flipped their positions as she flew through air "with her feet pressed harshly to chest of the Elite" and the moment that the Elite hit the ground, back-first with her standing on top of him, she released the two cooked frag grenades and swiftly sprinted forwards, grabbing the battle rifle that was held securely on her back.

She brought her rifle up to her line-of-sight, just as both of the grenades detonated, killing the Elite in a mess of fire and flesh.

She swiftly scanned her surroundings, and she quickly ascertained her location, the basic layout of the battlefield, and the position of her fellow soldiers, relative to her own. She sprinted forwards, stooping down, and crouching behind a low embankment in front of the exterior of the third story of a building "a building in a very large city. The entire city was manmade, floating on a very large manmade metallic platform. This platform supported the entire city, as it floated on the surface of the ocean "the ocean that covered the entire surface of this planet.

Lieutenant Capulti quickly checked her two weapons, her battle rifle and her shotgun, before securing the shotgun on her back, and leveling her battle rifle at eye level.

She swiftly snapped back to the current conflict. Screeching sounds of battle raged all around her. Grenades detonated. Plasma stormed, scorched, and seared metal, armor, gel-layers, and flesh. She turned her head to view behind her, and she saw that any and all of her ODST comrades were quickly lining up against the embankment that she had taken refuge behind. They were all crouched down on the exterior of the third story of the building, and the embankment was constantly taking plasma fire from the opposite side. It wouldn't take much more, and she knew it.

Soon, Captain Keyes reached her side, crouching down just as he did so. The front of his armor had smears of blood on it "the blood of Grunts and Elites. She smirked under her helmet. Captain Keyes and Capulti may have hated each other, but they both hated their enemy more, and that was very clear. Their hatred was not a factor now, though, because their respect for each other was all that mattered at the current moment.

Captain Keyes depolarized his visor and looked over his shoulder as Dutch, Romeo, and Major Silva ran to the embankment and crouched down to join them.

Lieutenant Capulti and Major Silva depolarized their own visors as well.

Dutch had a noticeable burn mark on the upper left shoulder of his armor. The armor was fine and completely intact, but they all knew that the heat had purposefully been transferred the gel-layers and the flesh beneath the armor's exterior, so as to better-preserve the armor. The heat had not affected the armor, but it had affected Dutchâ€"although he showed no sign of his immense pain.

"Dutch, heal that up. Use the nano-healing-serum in your med-paâ€" " Captain Keyes started, but Dutch cut him off.

"With all due respect, sir, I've got a lot more blood to lose before it becomes a problem. I'm good." he replied. Captain Keyes nodded.

Captain Keyes peeked over the embankment in front of them. He ducked his head back behind the small wall, just as two Covenant carbine rounds flew past him.

Keyes looked around him, and he assessed his soldiers' conditions. Two had been killed already, and their bodies were among those that were gathered behind the embankment. They did not leave a Helljumper behind. Ever. He understood thisâ€"and he respected it, very muchâ€"but he also understood that dead weight was dead weight. He sighed. He knew the two soldiersâ€"as he always knew his soldiers, especially the ones that died. Corporal Martha McGinty, and Private Marlo Masante.

Captain Keyes quickly shook his head.

"It wasn't supposed to be this hot, was it, sir?" Romeo asked aptly.

Keyes shook his head. "No. No, it wasn't. But when was the last time that we were fed good intel?" he asked Romeo in return.

"Wait. There was mission where they actually gave us good intel? Where the hell was I for that?" he asked in return, semi-jokingly.

"Yeah. Before your time." Major Silva responded, smirking as he did so. Romeo nodded and chuckled slightly.

"Listen, they got this whole damn city locked down. Tight. So we're gonna act like butter. Slip in. Grease up their stronghold, and get 'em to let go. Lieutenant, you take Romeo and Dutch and get charges placed at the base of the building that holds our objective. Romeo, you're on overmatch. Watch them both and make sure that the attention of the enemy is on you, at all times. And the moment, that they turn to look at youâ€"waste 'em." Captain Keyes ordered, and the soldiers nodded to him.

Dutch pulled several explosive charges out of the pack on his back, and he securely attached them to the strong magnetic strip around his waist.

"Good. Once the charges are set, then fall back. We'll blow them, divert their attention to the source, and attack from the opposite

side, creating a huge hole in their defensive lines. Romeo and a few other snipers will keep overwatch over the charges, and when they blow, you will pick off any of them that come to investigate. Understood?" Keyes said seriously. They all nodded.

Lieutenant Capulti smirked at the sheer boldness of the plan. Keyes noticed this, but he said nothing. He would have to address the fact that he didn't think that she could do anything other than frown later.

Major Silva noticed this swift, small, silent, exchange between the two, but he remained silent. He'd ask Captain Keyes if he was sleeping with the Lieutenant later. The three leaders repolarized their visors, but right before Captain Keyes's face disappeared behind his dark visor, Lieutenant Capulti caught the faintest sigh of a smirkâ€"aimed right at her.

"Good. I'll take the rest of the Helljumpers to lead a false frontal offensive and distract the enemy, while the charges are laid. Get in there, and get out. Go. Now!" Keyes yelled, as he turned to Major Silva behind him, and began to give him orders, regarding the false frontal offensive.

Lieutenant turned to Dutch and Romeo. "You heard the man. Let's move." she said, and as she did so, she got up, and sprinted for the stairs to the lower levels of the exterior of the building.

Dutch and Romeo followed closely behind, as Captain Keyes and his men launched themselves off of the platform, and began to return fire upon their enemies.

The drop site was hotter than any of them had hoped. But, it was nowhere near as hot as they expected it to be. They were used to high temperatures. They were Helljumpers. And this was hell.

\*\*A/N: Well, I hope that you all enjoyed that chapter. On a side-note, any and all of you, wonderful readers/reviewers, should surely check-out my profile, and see what other of my publicly posted FanFics might interest you! There may be a few. If you have read a book, then the chances are that I have read it as well, and if I have read it, then I'd love to talk about it! Message me, if any of you guys have any questions, or just want to chat, about ANYTHING. I'd love to hear from you! Well, stay tuned for the next update, and please click that subscribe/alert button, if you want the alerts for updates on this story, or simply message me, and ask me to message you every time I update, as I would be HAPPY to do so! So, please R&R, and stay tuned for the next update! \*\*

End  
file.